

# Judicial Clerkships

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## What is a clerkship?

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One- or two-year salaried positions with federal, state, local, administrative, or international judges.

Work varies with court and individual judges, but law clerks at the trial and appellate levels participate in all aspects of the judicial process.



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## Why should I clerk?

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- A clerkship gives you the opportunity to:
  - Hone legal research and writing skills;
  - Gain knowledge of and experience with court procedures;
  - Observe a variety of lawyering styles and skills;
  - Discuss legal theories with an expert;
  - Establish connections to a local bar; and
  - Develop a mentor relationship with a judge.



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## What are the benefits of clerking?

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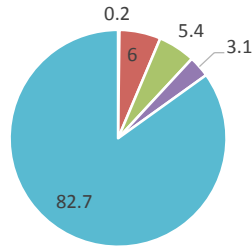
- Sets you up for success in your legal career
- Makes you a better lawyer
- Opens career doors
- Provides mentorship
- Builds your legal network



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# Lack of Diversity Among Clerks

All Law Clerks (2013)

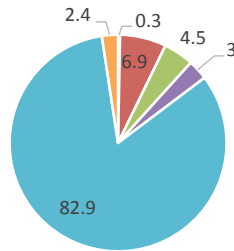


■ Native American ■ Asian/Pacific Islander ■ African-American ■ Hispanic ■ White ■ Multi-Racial



# Lack of Diversity Among Clerks

Federal Clerks

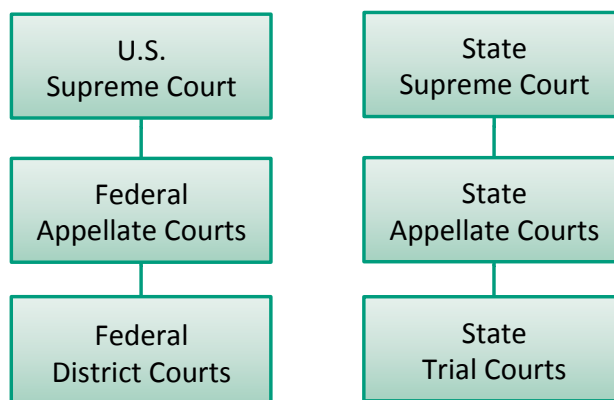


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## Where should I clerk?

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## Am I a viable clerkship candidate?

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- Judges consider:
  - Law school
  - Work experience
  - Journal membership
  - Performance in law school
  - Letters of recommendation and calls from recommenders
  - Geographic ties



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## Can I afford it?

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- Pay for law clerks varies by location and type of clerkship.
- For federal salary information, see the U.S. Courts website (generally, JS-11 for new graduates):  
<http://www.uscourts.gov/careers/compensation/judiciary-salary-plan-pay-rates>
- State salaries vary greatly.
- Also,
  - Many law firms provide clerkship bonuses if you begin after a clerkship.
  - Clerkships may qualify for public service loan forgiveness.



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## When do I apply?

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- Timing varies by judge, court, and location.
- Generally, 1-2 years before the clerkship begins.
- Some judges will indicate how many years' worth of grades they require.
  - Fall 2L year
  - Early spring 2L year
  - Summer after 2L year
  - 3L year or later, with some practice experience



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## How do I apply?

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- Typical components of a clerkship application are:
  - Cover letter
  - Resume
  - Law school transcript
  - Writing sample
  - 3 letters of recommendation
- Where to find clerkship vacancies:
  - OSCAR (Online System for Clerkship Application and Review), <https://oscar.uscourts.gov/>
  - UScourts.gov, <http://www.uscourts.gov/careers/search-judiciary-jobs>
  - Individual court websites, for example <https://www.flmd.uscourts.gov/CareerOps/CareerOps.htm> or <http://www.flcourts.org/administration-funding/employment/>
  - Send a resume and cover letter to any judges for whom you may be interesting in clerking



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## What will my future employer think?

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- Generally, employers recognize the value to them of you spending a year as a judicial law clerk, including the training you receive and the prestige it incurs.
- Most large law firms will defer an offer for a judicial clerkship, provided it begins right after law school, before starting at the firm.
- Government Honors programs are open to judicial law clerks.



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## What programs exist for diverse candidates?

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- Just The Beginning: A Pipeline Organization
- ABA Judicial Clerkship Program
- Local programs



## Just The Beginning: A Pipeline Organization

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- Founded in 1992 to expand the diversity of the legal field, JTB-APO is a not-for-profit organization of judges, lawyers, and other citizens dedicated to improving the legal system, preserving the history of the integration of the judiciary and promoting diversity in the legal profession.
- Programs for middle school, high school, and law students.
- JTB offers pipeline programs aimed at inspiring young students and increasing diversity in the legal profession and the judiciary.



## JRC-JTB Summer Internship Program

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- JTB-APO partners with the Judicial Resources Committee to offer federal judicial internships
- Founded in 2011 by Judge Ann Claire Williams (7<sup>th</sup> Cir.) and Judge Gerald Bruce Lee (E.D. Va.) with JRC Committee
- More than 100 participating federal district and circuit court judges
- 300+ law students placed in summer externships
- Program has screening and mandatory training components and offers an excellent training opportunity to hone skills sought by judges hiring law clerks
- Applications are accepted November through January every year



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## JTB Share The Wealth Clerkship Program

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- Founded in 2001 by Judge Lee, Judge James Spencer, Judge Raymond Jackson, and Judge Alexander Williams.
- Share the Wealth is a referral program run by judges in partnership with JTB-APO. Participating judges screen qualified law student applicants and conduct panel interviews with students to identify candidates for clerkship positions.
- At the conclusion of this initial process, JTB-APO shares application packages for those students who have not received an offer with additional judges who request to receive applicant information through JTB-APO.
- Applications are accepted in July of every year.



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## JTB Share The Wealth Clerkship Program

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- JTB-APO's Share the Wealth Program has resulted in the hiring of over 100 diverse students in federal clerkships in an effort to increase diversity among Federal Court clerks. JTB-APO utilizes a widespread law school network in addition to the JRC-JTB intern alumni pool to continue to place diverse law students in federal clerkships.
- Applicants for this program should discuss their commitment to civic engagement and interest in diversity issues in their cover letter.
- Complete applications are due August, 2017 – specific date to be released by the end of June, 2017.
- Applications are submitted through OSCAR unless otherwise specified by a hiring judge.



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## Tips for Success from Judge Julie S. Sneed

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- Focus on your academics and maintain good standing
- Seek skill-building opportunities such as internships, clinics, law review, moot court, or trial team
- Obtain a writing sample that is error-free and demonstrates your writing skills and knowledge of citation rules
- Draft a cover letter that tells the judge who you are, what you seek to gain from a clerkship or what you plan to do in the future, why you want to clerk, and how your experiences or skills will be valuable as a clerk
- Involve yourself in local bar organizations, attend networking events, or form a mentor relationship with a lawyer or judge
- Develop your writing skills by publishing an article on an area of interest or taking advanced legal writing or seminar courses



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# Questions?

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# Contact Us

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